

Ron Saunders' Toronto pick: the Toronto islands

If you have a day or half day free, and the weather is nice, head to the docks at the south end of Bay Street (very close to the Westin Harbour Castle Hotel) and take the ferry to the Toronto islands. There you have the best view of the skyline, lots of parkland for a stroll or a picnic, bicycle paths (with rentals available at the south end of Centre Island), beaches, a lagoon, and plenty of ducks and geese to keep you company. There are no cars, except for the occasional service vehicle.

If you have young children with you, take the ferry to Centre Island, where there is an amusement park with rides and games mainly oriented to children 12 and under. Near the amusement park is “Far Enough Farm” with farmyard animals and exotic birds. Then walk over the bridge across the lagoon to the south side of the islands for a view of Lake Ontario. The bike rentals—also bike-powered carriages for families—are near there. Or rent a rowboat to travel the lagoon.

My own favourite place is on a different part of the islands. Take the ferry to Ward’s Island. Near where the ferry lands are two beautiful villages—on Ward’s Island and Algonquin Island—where people live year-round and use the ferries to commute to the mainland. Walk through the Ward’s Island village, have a snack at the Island Cafe, then walk up the main pathway along the lagoon, cross the first bridge over the lagoon and keep going straight through part of the Algonquin Island village to the lake. There you have one of the nicest views of the Toronto skyline.

Head back across the bridge over the lagoon and have lunch, tea or a late-afternoon snack at the Rectory Café. It has the most beautiful patio in Toronto, with a tree canopy that makes you feel like you’re in the middle of a forest and a pathway that leads to the boardwalk.

A day or half day on the islands is one of the best ways to relax and have fun in Toronto. If you go on the weekend, I recommend heading out in the morning, as the ferries can get quite crowded in the afternoon.

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